Countering Global Extremism and Terrorism: the Role of International Organizations

Contra el Extremismo y el Terrorismo Globales: el papel de las Organizaciones Internacionales

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Resumen

El objetivo del artículo es identificar las principales direcciones de las actividades de las organizaciones (la ONU, la Unión Europea, la Liga de Estados Árabes (LEA) y la Organización de Cooperación Islámica (OCI)) dirigidas a reducir el proceso de radicalización, influyendo en el desarrollo del extremismo y el terrorismo. Para alcanzar el objetivo fijado, el método del estudio ha sido el análisis documental. Se han resumido los diferentes conceptos y modelos de radicalización, se ha sistematizado el marco normativo que aborda las actividades de las organizaciones (la ONU, la Unión Europea, la Liga de Estados Árabes (LEA) y la Organización de Cooperación Islámica (OCI) en el ámbito de la prevención y la lucha contra el terrorismo internacional. Se concluye que la evolución de las actividades de las organizaciones internacionales puede describirse como un cambio radical en las opiniones de la comunidad internacional del siglo XXI sobre el terrorismo internacional; lo que antes se consideraba un fenómeno que a veces se percibía como importante, pero definitivamente no como un problema estratégico central o grave, ahora, de hecho, tiene el rango de una amenaza existencial para la paz y la seguridad internacionales. Al mismo tiempo, se evidencian problemas sin resolver que comprometen la cooperación internacional por diferencias fundamentales entre los Estados a la hora de definir el terrorismo, arraigadas en sus ideologías, experiencias históricas, intereses, prejuicios y falta de confianza

Palabras clave: Radicalización; radicalismo; extremismo; terrorismo; derecho internacional; seguridad

Abstract

The aim of the article is to identify the main directions of activities of organizations (the UN, the European Union, the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)) aimed at reducing the radicalization process, influencing the development of extremism and terrorism. In order to achieve the set objective, the main method in the study was document analysis. We have summarized the different concepts and models of radicalization highlighted by researchers in their works. This allowed us to better present the causes of radicalization, and to systematize the normative framework that addresses the activities of organizations (the UN, the European Union, the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the field of preventing and combating international terrorism. The authors conclude that the evolution of the activities of international organizations can be described as a radical change in the views of the international community in the 21st century on international terrorism. What used to be considered a phenomenon that was at times perceived as important, but definitely not a central or serious strategic problem, now, in fact, has the rank of an existential threat to international peace and security. At the same time, there are many unresolved problems that complicate international co-operation. There are still fundamental differences among States in defining terrorism, rooted in their ideologies, historical experiences, interests, prejudices and lack of trust.

Keywords: Radicalization; radicalism; extremism; terrorism; international law; security.

INTRODUCTION

In the first decades of the 21st century, an increase in the number of terrorist attacks has become a reason not only to think about the processes that push individuals towards extremism and terrorism but also to conduct research on how to minimize this problem which, as modern international events show, is only getting worse (Gribanova and Karatueva, 2022).

We need to clarify the focus of our research since scholars concerned with terrorism and extremism consider the issue based on different methodological approaches (Khlebushkin et al., 2021). Within the framework of this study, we do not touch upon the criminal and forensic components of this phenomenon, although scholars actively debate these issues. This is due to the fact that the development of extremism and terrorism is determined by the socio-political context. Thus, our research is conducted for the needs of law enforcement agencies and institutions responsible for ensuring national security and public order. However, to analyze the phenomenon of terrorism, it is crucial to determine the causes and motives of terrorists. Ideology, religion, and philosophy are possible reasons. In this regard, we do not refer to ideologies but their extreme interpretations. Therefore, it seems necessary to consider radicalism and extremism in the study of terrorism.

The relationship between radicalization and terrorism is considered not only by socio-political scholars but also by international organizations and interstate associations (Borichev et al., 2022; Rybak et al., 2023). For example, the European Union adopted a strategy to combat terrorism and the document titled "Radicalization, Recruitment and EU Counter-Radicalization Strategy" (2008). The USA also recognizes the need to take measures in the field of awareness of citizens and their attitude towards terrorist organizations, the ideas they propagate, and the methods of their dissemination. For these purposes, the "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism" was adopted in 2003.

Our research focuses on activities in preventing and combating terrorism by such international organizations as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the League of Arab States (LAS), and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Several factors support this approach. First, after the collapse of the bipolar system in the early 1990s, there was a noticeable change in the perception of terrorism: from a peripheral threat to national security and the issue of the justice system and criminal law (Polovchenko, 2022) to an existential threat and one of the main factors of international destabilization. The UN took on the main role, defining terrorism as "one of the most serious threats to international peace and security" (UNSC Declaration on Global Counter-Terrorism Efforts, 2001). Second, the activities of such regional organizations as the EU, LAS, and OIC, launched in the 1990s and intensified after the September 11 attacks resulted in conventions, protocols, action plans, and instruments ensuring coordination, information exchange, assistance, and monitoring the implementation of obligations assumed by the member states. Third, due to the limitation of this study, the military-political blocs (NATO, CSTO), the Organization of American States, and the African Union were not considered as part of this study. The

analysis of their activities in preventing and combating terrorism may become a prospect for further research.

The study identifies the main activities of the organizations (UN, EU, LAS, and OIC) aimed at reducing radicalization, affecting the development of extremism and terrorism.

To understand the research subject, we examined the concepts and models of radicalization that influence the development of extremism into terrorism. Further, we analyzed the activities of the international organizations in preventing and combating international terrorism. In conclusion, we identified contradictions and challenges faced by international institutions and government bodies to reduce the risks of terrorist threats.

To achieve the objective, the main method used in the study was document analysis. It embraced different types of materials depending on the focus of our research. The first group of materials (scientific articles, monographs, and conference abstracts) explains the concepts and models of radicalization and explores extremism and terrorism as a consequence of radicalization.

The second group was based on the analysis of official documents, legislative acts, and protocols of the UN, EU, and LAS.

To study the UN initiatives, we used the following documents:

- UN Conventions: on offences committed or acts done by a person on board any aircraft (Tokyo, 1963), for the suppression of unlawful seizure of aircraft (The Hague, 1970), for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of civil aviation (Montreal, 1971), on marking of plastic explosives for the purpose of detection (Montreal, 1991), on the suppression of unlawful acts relating to international civil aviation (Beijing, 2010), for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of maritime navigation (Rome, 1988), on the physical protection of nuclear material (Vienna, 1980), for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism (New York, 2005), on the prevention and punishment of crimes against internationally protected persons (New York, 1973), for the suppression of terrorist bombings (New York, 1997).
- UN International Conventions: against the taking of hostages (New York, 1979), for the suppression of the financing of terrorism (New York, 1999).
- UN Protocols: for the suppression of unlawful acts of violence at airports serving international civil aviation (Montreal, 1988), for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of maritime navigation (2005), for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of fixed platforms located on the continental shelf (2005).

To study the EU initiatives, we referred to the Treaty of Maastricht, Europol Convention on combating terrorism, Counter-Terrorism Action Plan (2001), Declaration on combating terrorism, Declaration of solidarity to victims of terrorism (2004), EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2005), and EU Strategy for combating radicalization and recruitment to terrorism (2005).

To study the LAS initiatives, we analyzed the Arab Counter-Terrorism Strategy (1994), the Arab Convention for the suppression of terrorism (1998), and the Code of Conduct for the LAS Member States on combating terrorism (1996).

To study the OIC initiatives, we considered the Guidelines for combating terrorism (1994) and the OIC Convention on combating international terrorism (1999).

DISCUSSION

1. Concepts and models of radicalization

The European Commission defines radicalization as "a complex phenomenon in which individuals or groups become intolerant with regard to basic democratic values like equality and diversity; as well as a rising propensity toward using means of force to reach political goals that negate and/or undermine democracy" (Jensen et al., 2018). The European Commission draws attention to the growing scale and speed of this phenomenon and emphasizes that it is not limited to some member states but also extends beyond the EU, posing a significant risk of terrorist attacks in Europe).

The European Commission Statement of 21 September 2005 addressed to the European Parliament and the European Council claims that radicalization is "a phenomenon in which people embrace opinions, views and ideas that can lead to acts of terrorism". The process of radicalization is regarded as a means of recruitment into terrorist organizations (Shazad, 2011). It is worth supplementing these definitions with national concepts. For example, the UK Counter Terrorism Strategy defines radicalization as the process by which "people come to support terrorism and violent extremism, and in some cases become involved in terrorist groups" (The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism, 2023).

We also need to consider definitions developed by scholars. Some of them define radicalization as "a growing extreme of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral patterns that support intergroup conflict and violence" (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008). Others define radicalization as the process by which an individual, group, or mass of people undergoes a transformation from participation in the political process through legal methods to the use or support of violence for political purposes (Jiménez-Reina et al., 2023). The effect of this process is radicalism, rather than terrorism or extremism (Crosset and Spitaletta, 2010). It is also an individual mental and emotional process in which people accept extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations, where the achievement of specific goals justifies the use of violence and which prepares and motivates a person for aggressive behavior (Wilner and Dubouloz, 2010; Ilchyshyn, 2023). Summarizing this review of the definitions of radicalization, we need to highlight several features. First, radicalization is a process in which people gradually change their beliefs. Second, the authors of these definitions agree that radicalization can engage some people in violence for political purposes, including acts of terrorism. These definitions indicate that the concept of radicalization refers to various aspects of political perception, including cognitive (beliefs, opinions, attitudes, concepts), affective (feelings and values), and behavioral elements, which lead to violent actions.

One of the first models describing radicalization is called the "Staircase to terrorism." The first stage of radicalization concerns the perception of injustice and

relative deprivation, i.e., the deterioration of the existing human condition. When a person's situation does not improve or even change and they believe that their living conditions are less favorable than those of others, this is also called relative deprivation. The first level refers to anger directed against the perpetrators of injustice, and the second is the moral obligation to justify terrorism and radicalism. The third level involves radicalization, i.e., joining a terrorist group. The fourth level marks the dehumanization of civilians on the enemy's side, which should legitimize the use of violence against them (McCauley, 2017).

The next model is a four-stage model of terrorist thinking that interprets radicalization as a process in which a person, to reach the next level of radicalization, must go through its previous levels. The process begins with the interpretation of an event or phenomenon using the statement "this is wrong" (1) and as unfair or something that does not happen to everyone (2). This event may relate to economic (poverty, unemployment, living conditions) or social (government restrictions, violation of order or morality) problems. This injustice is blamed on the specific person or nation associated with the event (3). The person/nation is demonized, which facilitates the justification or use of aggression (4) (Borum, 2003).

One of the most interesting models of radicalization is the so-called "Pyramid of extremism" which shows how moderate activism can develop into terrorism (Silber and Bhatt, 2007). At the base of the pyramid is moderate activism, i.e., the organization of legal demonstrations. The next level is civil disobedience, including blockades, peaceful occupation of buildings, etc. Although such actions are illegal, they do not qualify as extremism. A higher level is extremism, i.e., the use of violence based on ideological motives, which manifests itself in arson or bombing, as well as violence directed against individuals. The highest level is terrorism, including murders and mass violations of public order, which differs from extremism in the nature and scale of violence (Lenos and Wouterse, 2018).

2. Extremism and terrorism as a consequence of radicalization

Extremism is understood as a set of views, ideas, demands, or behavioral patterns that are extreme in relation to the current balance of political forces (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2013). Such organizations have radical programs and postulate radical changes in the political structure (Hogg et al., 2013). Extremist groups oppose the current political system. Their political attractiveness is characterized by uncompromising, unconventional, and radical solutions (Jensen et al., 2018) and violence is recognized as a means and method of implementing radical slogans.

Extremism is not an element of a specific ideology but rather a universal phenomenon (Jasko et al., 2017) since it allows the use of methods and means that ignore generally accepted norms of behavior, especially those that ignore life, liberty, and civil rights (Hogg, 2014).

Extremism is closely related to the phenomenon of terrorism. Their common element is violence as an extra-legal means of action used for political purposes (Zelenkov et al., 2021). Like extremism, terrorism is an ambiguous and multifaceted con-

cept. It can be regarded as an extreme action involving the use of broadly defined violence (Abrahms, 2012) or activities contrary to the law (Lammers, 2017). However, if extremists use violence to change the system, terrorists use violence to spread propaganda and awaken fear (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008).

Unlike radicalism, political or religious extremism not only requires fundamental changes in the system but also seeks to completely change it (Zelenkov et al., 2021). Radical methods and means remain within the scope of this system; extremism uses (not only) illegal means and methods that are unrecognized in the sphere in which it operates (Iskakov et al., 2023). Thus, extremism is similar to the phenomenon of terrorism and partially overlaps with it.

Extremist organizations, parties, and movements that use terrorist methods have an ideological basis for their actions and goals. Among new extremist movements, the most important are environmentalism, anti-globalism, and religious fundamentalism.

Environmentalism places nature above humans in the hierarchical order. Society poses a threat to the natural environment, which justifies eco-terrorism subordinated to the needs of nature (Tulloch, 2013).

Understood as criticism of the negative aspects of globalization, anti-globalism is a multidimensional movement partially allowing the use of violence (or the threat of its use), which is adopted by radical parts of this movement and directed against representatives of countries or entities that are considered responsible for globalization (Zakharova and Peskov, 2004). A common feature of anti-globalization calls is the emphasis on economic issues and the social consequences of this process (Mikhailova, 2011).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, religious fundamentalism has been a special factor supporting acts of violence (Togaibayeva et al., 2021). When interpreting fundamentalism, it is associated with extremist sentiments and allows for terrorist methods to return to the fundamentals of a given religion or ideology (Coreno, 2002). The acceptance of violence is noticeable among radical fundamentalists who strictly follow the holy books that form the basis of their religion.

Thus, Jewish (Israeli) fundamentalism is based on the denial of a secular state and nationalism (Odhiambo, 2014). The goal is to make Israel a religious state like the Promised Land. This causes the criticism of radicals and their refusal to legitimize the current political system.

Radical Christians, especially American Protestants, respond to modern changes around them (Emerson and Hartman, 2006). In this context, violent actions can be taken against those who violate the basic principles established by their religion.

Islamic fundamentalism calls for a return to the roots of Islam along with strict adherence to its principles. It opposes modernism, religious diversity, and heresy. It is believed that the laws of Islam should be strictly observed (King and Taylor, 2011). A return to the basics of the religion leads to the recognition of only Qur'anic law with the denial of statutory law. Strict adherence to religious rules is accompanied by isolation from non-Muslims (Lauzière, 2010).

In the 20th and 21st centuries, radical political doctrines and religious fundamentalism became a convenient ideological environment for the acceptance of violence as a tool for achieving political goals. Thus, modern terrorism grew out of the acceptance of violence and is associated with an ideological system (political or religious). Consequently, it is necessary to prepare not only systems, procedures, and institutions for combating terrorism (counter-terrorism), but also carrying out activities aimed at minimizing the influence of radicalism and extremism.

3. Activities of international organizations in the field of preventing and combating terrorism

3.1. UN Initiatives

After its creation, the UN introduced a model of preventing and suppressing terrorism called the "sectoral approach". It consists in identifying crimes related to terrorist activities and developing agreements to facilitate the fight against them on an international scale (Arrieta-López, 2022; Bossong, 2014). As a result, sectoral conventions were developed which became the most important source of international law in fighting against terrorism (Ledyakh, 2013). To date, the international community under the auspices of the UN has adopted 19 universal legal acts directly or indirectly combating terrorism.

The first conventions were a reaction to the spread of civil passenger aviation and aimed at protecting it against terrorism. Under the auspices of the International Civil Aviation Organization (a specialized agency of the UN), anti-terrorism conventions and protocols (Brady and Stolzer, 2016) targeted actions that violate flight safety. They mainly regulated such issues as the establishment of jurisdiction by the participating states and the process of extradition; the definition of an aircraft hijacking (or an airport takeover) using force, threat of violence, or any other form of intimidation as a crime; obliging the member states to recognize such an act as a crime subject to severe punishment; allowing the perpetrators to be arrested and punished before a terrorist attack; control and restriction of the use of unmarked and undetectable plastic explosives.

These conventions served as a model for conventions and protocols in maritime safety adopted under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization (Frequently Asked Questions on International Law Aspects of Countering Terrorism, 2009).

Another specialized UN organization dealing with international terrorism is the International Atomic Energy Agency. According to its conventions, it is a crime to illegally possess, use, transfer, or steal nuclear materials. The threat of using such materials to cause death, serious bodily injury, or significant property damage falls into the same category. The member states are responsible for the physical protection of nuclear materials at their disposal and are obliged to create appropriate systems for their safety (Bassiouni, 2002; Rzabay et al., 2022).

Under the auspices of the UN, anti-terrorism conventions were also adopted concerning crimes related to the special status of the victim (hostages under international protection), the fight against terrorist bombings and the financing of terrorism, including the definition of a conventional crime and the imposition of obligations on the member states to punish it and take measures to detect, freeze, or confiscate the funds used to commit it (Amet and Arnold, 2013; Ryssaldiyeva et al., 2019).

Most conventions were based on the same model and included three main elements:

- The definition of a conventional crime (type of terrorist activity that is the subject of this convention);
- The obligation of states to establish jurisdiction over persons who committed conventional crimes;
- The obligation of states to punish conventional crimes within domestic law in a manner consistent with the gravity of these offenses.

In 1994, the General Assembly adopted a declaration on measures to eliminate international terrorism that stipulated the need for a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention. The next logical step was to create a new ad hoc committee whose task was to develop a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT). To date, consensus on the adoption of this convention has not been reached yet. Such a comprehensive convention would not only fill the gaps in international law and determine the relationship between terrorism, national liberation struggle, and state terrorism but also limit the abuses that arise as a result of the fact that some regional instruments provide the opportunity to adjust the concept of terrorism to political purposes (Stephen, 2006).

When characterizing the UN's role in preventing and combating international terrorism, one cannot ignore the activities of the Security Council. Currently, the Security Council is the key body ensuring international cooperation aimed at preventing and combating terrorism. In 1999, the Council adopted Resolution No. 1269 calling for the intensification of international anti-terrorism cooperation (Stephens, 2004).

After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1373 which established an anti-terrorism regime. The resolution makes states adopt anti-terrorism legislation, freeze the finances of individuals involved in terrorist activities, and intensify international cooperation in preventing terrorism. The implementation of this resolution is also monitored by a special body of the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) (Kendall, 2006). It is an international multilateral body strengthening the capacity of countries and the international community in the fight against terrorism and monitoring legislative changes that are necessary to achieve this goal. Resolution 1373 and the CTC actions have brought the anti-terrorism campaign to a global level.

3.2. Activities of the EU in countering terrorism

In the Maastricht Treaty (signed on February 7, 1992, entered into force on November 1, 1993), the European Communities created two new forms of cooperation defined as the First Pillar and the Second Pillar: a common foreign and security policy and enhanced cooperation home (domestic) affairs and justice. The issue of combating terrorism was touched upon in the Third Pillar (Article K. 1, Clause 9). Although certain aspects also relate to the Second Pillar, the main goals are to protect the peace, strengthen security, and consolidate democracy and the rule of law [39]. Within the framework of the Third Pillar, the EU took the most important actions in the fight against terrorism. However, terrorism had not been considered a serious threat before September 11.

On July 26, 1995, the EU Member States signed the Europol Convention in Cannes (based on Article K. 3 of the Treaty on the EU), which entered into force on October 1, 1998. According to this document, Europol is obliged to combat crimes against life, health, personal freedom, and property associated with terrorist activities (Deflem, 2006).

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the member states held an extraordinary European Council meeting on September 21 and adopted an Action Plan on Countering Terrorism containing 79 legal measures. Within a few weeks and months, many documents were developed and decisions were made regarding the fight against terrorism, which had become a priority in the functioning of almost all EU bodies. Between mid-2002 and the Madrid attacks in March 2004, the EU counter-terrorism activity was declining at the senior level but not at the operational level.

As a result of the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London, the EU's activities in the fight against terrorism intensified. The most important result was the adoption of a fundamental document called the "European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy" in early December 2005 (The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy, 2005). The strategy places direct responsibility for the fight against terrorism on the member states, while the EU must bring added value to this activity in the form of four elements: strengthening national capacity for action (analysis and lessons learned from good practice); improving European cooperation; developing collective action capacity (especially using bodies such as Europol, Eurojust, or Sitcen); promoting international partnerships (EU cooperation with international organizations (especially the UN) and leading countries).

Another significant document adopted after the terrorist attacks in London was the EU Strategy to combat radicalization and recruitment into terrorist groups. The strategy emphasizes the fight against the deep causes of radicalization through three areas: actively countering incitement to political violence and recruitment into terrorist structures (creating an expert base, monitoring mechanisms of radicalization, political dialogue, provisions prohibiting incitement to violence); narrative warfare (ensuring the dominance of moderate ideological and religious movements at the expense of their extremist wings); eliminating structural factors leading to radicalization and recruitment into terrorist structures (internal and external).

The EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Action Plan lays the basis of EU counter-terrorism activities (Kryshtanovych et al., 2022). The EU has launched many programs, initiatives, and institutions aimed at limiting the threat of terrorism, minimizing its consequences, and countering this form of political violence (Guidelines on human rights and the fight against terrorism, 2002).

In recent years, the EU has become one of the most important non-state actors in preventing and combating terrorism on an international scale. Indeed, many EU actions may raise doubts, especially motivated by concerns that participation in anti-terrorism activities may have negative effects on the fundamental rights protected by the EU and its member states.

3.3. The LAS and OIC in countering terrorism

The first comprehensive document aimed at combating terrorism in the Arab world was the Arab Counter-Terrorism Strategy (1994). It aimed at achieving the following eight goals: to combat terrorism and eliminate its causes; to maintain the security and stability of the Arab world and protect it from terrorism; to strengthen the rule of law; to maintain national security in the Arab world and promote respect for human rights; to secure government and infrastructure in Arab countries; to promote the true image of Islam and the Arab civilization; to develop cooperation among Arab states; to improve cooperation with other countries and international organizations.

In 1996, the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC) adopted rules of conduct for the member states in relation to the fight against terrorism, including preventing the crossing of borders by terrorist structures and the use of the territories of the member states, as well as the exchange of information and legal assistance.

On April 22, 1998, 16 Arab Ministers of Justice and the Interior of all the Arab member states signed the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism at the summit in Cairo (The Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, 1998). It defines terrorism as "any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to saw panic among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or seeking to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property or to occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize national resources".

This definition is extremely broad and can give rise to serious controversy due to possible abuse as a result of attempts to use the concept of terrorism to combat political opposition. Regardless of the motivation behind this action, and the difference between "terrorism" and "terrorist crime", the definition itself may also give rise to doubts, hindering the development and application of legal tools.

The document consists of 42 articles and is divided into three parts. The first part provides definitions and general rules. The second part covers the anti-terrorist cooperation of Arab countries in the sphere of security and justice. The third part concerns legal procedures, including extradition and protection of witnesses and experts. The obligations imposed on the states by this convention fall into two types:

political (the parties undertake to refrain from organizing, financing, or carrying out acts of terrorism and to cooperate in the fight against terrorist crimes, including the provision and exchange of relevant information) and legal (the obligation to coordinate, cooperate, and assist within existing judicial and legal regimes).

In March 2002, the Council of the Arab League decided to include additional provisions in the convention in the form of amendments. They prohibit the promotion and support of terrorism; printing and distribution of documents supporting terrorism; collection of funds used in terrorist activities; acquisition or use of property for terrorist purposes.

The position of the OIC and LAS in relation to the fight against terrorism is closely linked to the past of its member states, i.e., the experience of the colonial metropolises that used the concept of terrorism to discredit anti-colonial movements by calling them terrorists. This is a significant source of tension and lack of confidence in global anti-terrorism efforts. The consequence is not only the absence of an internationally accepted definition of terrorism (therefore, the impossibility of developing a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention) but also regular reservations in regional documents stating that the concept of terrorism cannot describe the activities of national liberation movements and armed struggle against occupation forces. The Middle East conflict, which is the focus of both the LAS and the OIC, has further aggravated this problem. Another factor causing tension was the exaggeration of terrorism in the Salafi-Jihad as part of the fourth wave of terrorism. According to Islamic countries, it has led to the identification of Islam with terrorism.

According to (Bacik, 2011), the OIC activities related to the fight against terrorism can be divided into three levels:

- Political statements in the form of resolutions and declarations adopted at various summits and conferences. These contain the following three elements: the condemnation of terrorism in all its forms; the need to distinguish between armed struggle (in the context of realizing the right to self-determination and the fight against foreign occupation) and terrorism; an assertion that Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance that cannot be identified with the actions of religious extremists.

- The code of conduct in the fight against terrorism adopted by the Islamic Summit in 1994 in Casablanca includes the following principles: 1) terrorism cannot be justified in any form (it is also required to distinguish between the forms of armed struggle mentioned above); 2) the member states must prevent and combat terrorism; 3) the member states must ensure the protection and security of diplomatic and consular missions in accordance with relevant international conventions.

- The OIC Convention against Terrorism defines terrorism and terrorist crimes. It also considers cooperation between the member states and procedures for implementing the principles of cooperation. Like the Arab League Convention, this document also defines terrorism in a broad manner. A terrorist crime is vaguely defined as any crime with terrorist objectives punishable by domestic law. These definitions create serious difficulties in interpretation and pose a real danger of flexible (political) concepts of terrorism and terrorist crimes.

Among other things, the cooperative aspect of the convention includes the obligations of the member states to refrain from direct or indirect (incitement, support, financing) participation in any terrorist activities. The member states must cooperate and coordinate their actions in the fight against terrorism (including the exchange of information, experience, and legal assistance) and strengthen borders, customs, and internal security controls. However, the method to implement these obligations is not defined or specified.

To summarize, the activities of international organizations in preventing, countering, and combating terrorism have been characterized by a paradox from the very beginning. On the one hand, the international community and its members are aware that terrorism understood as a transnational phenomenon poses a threat that can be prevented only through international coordination and cooperation. On the other hand, the effectiveness of this cooperation is hindered and even paralyzed due to the different interests of individual countries, the views and ideologies that give them identity and shape their policies, disagreements regarding the phenomenon of terrorism and its constituent elements, and the desire to utilize (subordinate to certain interests) both the phenomenon and the activities aimed at combating it. This internal tension and ambivalence are always present in interstate relations and the activities of international organizations related to terrorism.

In the 20th and 21st centuries, radical political ideology and religious fundamentalism created favorable conditions for using violence as a tool to achieve political goals. Modern terrorism developed from tolerance to violence and ideological patterns (political or religious). Thus, it is necessary to prepare not only systems and procedures for protecting against terrorist threats and institutions for combating terrorism (counterterrorism) but also to perform activities aimed at mitigating the influence of radicalism and extremism.

However, many problems remain unresolved, and the continued failure of the international community to create a universal anti-terrorism convention is particularly important. This situation is partially caused by different definitions of terrorism by individual states and international organizations. The problems are mostly political and ideological and are determined by historical experience, prejudices, interests, and trust issues. This is not surprising, given that terrorism is susceptible to various political manipulations and is repeatedly used in political games on the international stage.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we sought to explore the multifaceted roles of international organizations such as the UN, EU, LAS, and OIC in countering the global challenges of extremism and terrorism. Our findings underscore the complexity of defining terrorism, highlighting ideological, historical, and trust-based discrepancies that hinder unified international efforts. Despite these challenges, our analysis reveals a positive shift towards collaborative prevention and combat strategies against terrorism, emphasizing the critical importance of adopting a cohesive approach that addresses both the symptoms and root causes of radicalization.

Our study's objectives were to identify effective strategies employed by these international bodies, analyze the conceptual frameworks guiding their actions, and assess the impact of these strategies on global security dynamics. The conclusions drawn from our research suggest that while progress has been made, significant work remains to bridge the gaps in international cooperation.

To effectively prevent radicalization and terrorism, it is essential for international actors to pursue a unified approach that fosters collaboration across borders, recognizing the importance of shared definitions and frameworks for terrorism. Engaging local communities is critical in developing prevention strategies that address the root causes of radicalization. Investing in capacity building within vulnerable regions can enhance legal and institutional frameworks, while counter-narrative campaigns should aim to undermine extremist ideologies. Moreover, addressing socioeconomic disparities through targeted development programs can mitigate some of the conditions conducive to radicalization. Ensuring that counter-terrorism efforts are always aligned with human rights and the rule of law will maintain the necessary public trust and support for these initiatives.

The analysis faces limitations due to its reliance on document analysis, which may not capture the full complexity of how international organizations implement counter-terrorism strategies. Future research should consider empirical studies, including interviews with policymakers and ground-level operatives, to gain insights into the practical challenges and successes of these strategies. Additionally, exploring the impact of cultural differences on the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures could offer valuable perspectives for tailoring approaches to specific regional contexts.

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